

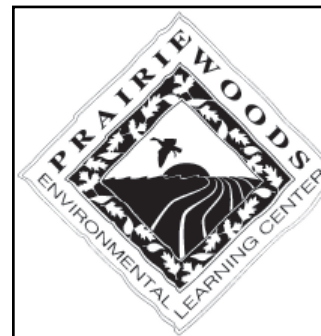


**PRAIRIE WOODS  
ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING CENTER**

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1-320-354-5894  
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# PRAIRIE WOODS

## Warbler



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SUMMER 2021

ISSUE 2

### BOARD MEMBERS 2021

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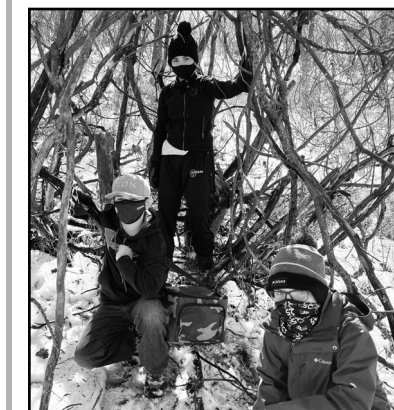
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Steven Friedlein,  
IMT, Challenge Course  
Coordinator  
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Program Facilitator  
Mari Klebe, IMT,  
Office Manager  
Shelli-Kae Foster  
YES! Grant Project Leader  
Kathy Hoganson,  
Building & Grounds  
Taylor Templer,  
YES! Coordinator  
Patsy Russell

### Hi....Nice to see you.....it has been awhile.

That seems to be the common reoccurring greeting of 2021. While the doors of our buildings were closed to the general public - through it all we never totally shut down. During the fall and over the winter we were still able to do outdoor programming with smaller school groups, home schools, and the local youth group homes. In May we were pleasantly surprised that we had a group to program with every day. Many of the groups were new, smaller, schools. It was different to see one school bus rolling up, instead of three at a time, but it was great to hear the excitement from the kids! It was tough to see the smiles through masks but no hiding the joy from their voices and the sighs of relief and gratitude from the teachers.



We are still not able to offer every activity but we are open for groups, families, and businesses. Give a call to set up a meeting or facility rental. Give a call to set up a customized program. Give a call to rent fat-tire bikes, kayaks, or canoes. Or just come out on your own to hike or bike the trails. We are open for business and we can't wait to see you!

### What has PWELC been up to since Spring 2020?

- Catching up on much needed building maintenance – Replaced boards and repainted the Barn and Granary
- Rebuilt 2 docks (Thank you Kent Rupp for donation of the use of your saw mill)
- Completed the Farmhouse Project (Thanks to monetary and labor donations from Myron & Carol Van de Ven)
- Rerouted waterlogged trails
- Purchased 15 sets of youth snowshoes (Thanks to a donation from Paul & Sandra Vollan)
- Built a divider in the Trailhead so restrooms are always open and available to the public (Thanks Kandiyohi County Community Service for the labor)
- New benches at the Pioneer Cabin (Congrats Riley Zammert on completing your Eagle Scout project)
- New trail signs on the Farmsite trails (Congrats Ben Palmer on completing your Eagle Scout project)
- Earth Day 2021! On April 24th we held a modified Earth Day Celebration out in the open at the Farmsite. Thank you Earth Day partners – Middle Fork Crow River Watershed District, North Fork Crow River Watershed District, Kandiyohi Soil and Water Conservation District, MN Pollution Control Agency, and all who donated to the Recycled Outdoor Gear Sale. Mother Nature cooperated with a gorgeous afternoon. It was a great way to ease back into a public event. Thank you to all who attended.
- Forkhorn Camp – 11 young adults received their fire arm safety certification while attending our 5 day, day camp style MDHA Forkhorn Camp. While demonstrating the maturity and knowledge of handling a firearm, they also got to have a typical “camp” experience. We welcome these young hunters to the hunting community.
- In 2021, as of June 30<sup>th</sup>, we were able to serve 4,000 participants. We thank all of you for working with us through COVID restrictions, our reduced number of staff and staff hours.



Board of  
Trustees



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6

Join Us!

## PRAIRIE WOODS ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING CENTER

### Annual Membership

#### WHY BE A MEMBER?

- ♦ Know you are supporting programs you believe in at an organization that is important to your community.
- ♦ Receive information and invitations to special events at Prairie Woods.
- ♦ Benefit from discounts on equipment rentals and programs.
- ♦ Continue to receive the *Warbler* newsletter three times a year.

Thank you for  
your support.

- ☐ New Member  
☐ Renewing Member

#### SUPPORTER'S MEMBERSHIP

- ☐ Individual Membership ..... \$35.00  
☐ Family Membership ..... \$50.00  
☐ Donation of \_\_\_\_\_ amount to the Sustainability Endowment  
☐ I / we are interested in volunteering at Prairie Woods.

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City/State/ZIP \_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_

Please enclose payment to Prairie Woods ELC, and send to:

Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center  
12718 10th Street NE  
Spicer, Minnesota 56288

Questions or comments? Please call us at 320-354-5894 or e-mail us at prairiewoods@prairiewoodselc.org



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2

### HAVE YOU HEARD?

On August 31, 2020 we said farewell and happy retirement to Dave Pederson, who served as executive director of Prairie Woods ELC for 17 years. Steve Friedlein, Kory Klebe and Mari Klebe are currently serving as the Interim Management Team during this uncertain time of lost revenue due to COVID disruptions. He has mentored the Team for years and left Prairie Woods in a great position. We know Dave is not replaceable but as programming and rentals are able to increase, the PWELC Governing Board, along with the Interim Management Team will discuss how and when to resume an executive director search. We wish Dave the best of luck in this new chapter of his life. You can find him paddling in the summer and skiing in the winter.



Happy Retirement Dave!

## Thank You



**The Bernick  
Family  
Foundation**

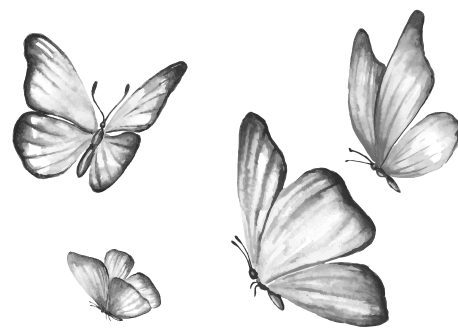
Thank you Bernick's Family Foundation and Willmar Area Community Foundation for granting PWELC the Paddle, Peddle, Push Adventure Series. We are half way through our 10 event series. Don't miss out on the last paddle and peddle events. Stay tuned to Facebook and our Website.

Thank you Lakeland Broadcasting for selecting PWELC as the August Community Spotlight Grant winner! We appreciate West Central Sanitation and KWLM as well as Johnson, Moody, Schmidt & Kleinhuizen and Big Country for co-sponsoring the advertising and helping us get the word out about Prairie Woods.

### ~ Not Forgotten ~

Prairie Woods lost several friends and supporters in 2020 and the beginning of 2021.  
 They will be dearly missed.

Dr. Jim Michels, Don Holmgren, Jon Wogan, Bill Thompson, Robert O'Fallon,  
 Florine Iverslie, Kay Strand, Pam Woltjer, Carol Bodin, Lee Olson, John Richards,  
 Mark Mertens and Mike Oldfield. We are so grateful for all the memorial  
 contributions given in honor of these loved ones.



**Tommy Swenson Memorial: Youth Shooting at the Gary Westby  
 Shooting Range: Thursday, July 29th 6:00-6:45, 6:45-7:30, 7:30-8:15**

**PWELC Sound Garden: Saturday, August 7th from 12-4pm**

**Pheasants Forever Youth Hunt: Saturday, August 14th 3:00-5:00**

**Little Crow & Swift County Archers 3-D 60 Bow Event: Sat. & Sun. August 14th & 15th 9am-2pm**

**Music Under the Prairie Stars: Friday, September 10th 5:30-9ish pm**



*Please remember Prairie Woods in your estate planning and annual giving.*

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5

### YES! YOUTH ECO SOLUTIONS UPDATES

-Taylor Templer- West Central YES! Coordinator

Youth Eco Solutions (YES!) just concluded its 14<sup>th</sup> season! This year 11 teams participated in the program with 5 teams in West Central Region including New London-Spicer Middle School, New London-Spicer High School, Lac qui Parle Valley, Yellow Medicine East, and Minnewaska. These teams worked on a variety of projects including kayaking to learn about aquatic invasive species and water quality, collecting and recycling holiday lights and markers, completing the Lights! Water! Action! Energy Kits at their homes to increase energy efficiency and water conservation awareness, installing pollinator boxes to learn about the benefits of native prairie plants, and more!



During the COVID-19 pandemic, YES! had to pivot programming from in-person to virtual. We continued to support our students, coaches, and environment by hosting interactive online events including 10 educational workshops that highlighted topics surrounding climate change, water quality, green careers, and energy efficiency. On May 19, the 2021 YES! annual Spring Judging took place via Zoom. Spring Judging is when YES! teams get a chance to show off their work by completing a final report and presenting their projects to a panel of judges. This year, Westbrook-Walnut Grove won 1<sup>st</sup> place and Mankato West and Sleepy Eye Schools tied for 2<sup>nd</sup> place. We can't wait to see what next year brings as many teams will continue their important work and new teams will join the program.

Major support for YES! comes from LYFT Career Pathways, Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF), and Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs).



NL-S student spreads harvested seeds on  
rain garden



West Central Coordinator teaches students  
about water quality



Lac qui Parle Valley students planting  
flower pots



Lac qui Parle Valley students kayak to learn  
about aquatic invasive species

### Prairie Woods Programs

Prairie Woods ELC has a new recreation opportunity, the Fat Tire Bike Program. PWELC received a grant through the Department of Natural Resources called "No Child Left Inside." Along with matching funds through donations, this grant helped PWELC purchase a fleet of fat tire bikes to use for programs and rentals on site. In 2019, a system of off-road trails was designed and developed by a group of volunteers and staff for year-round use. These trails have been groomed and maintained throughout every season, yes, even in the snow. The bikes arrived at a critical moment for Prairie Woods as the pandemic set in. Thankfully, we have been able to offer socially distant programming and rentals because of this new acquisition allowing our organization to still deliver on our mission. The bikes are used as a rotation for school groups as well as a rental opportunity for guests of all ages.



I want to share a story from a field trip this year. During one of our school programs, a young 4<sup>th</sup> grader came up to me and told me he had never ridden a bike before. I explained that everyone rides at their own pace and that there was no pressure. All he needed to do was get on the bike and balance and not worry about the peddles, those would come next. After a few minutes of rolling the bike along with his feet on the ground, he felt more comfortable. By the end of the rotation, he was riding a bike. A child went from feeling nervous to confident. These types of stories are common at PWELC, and I am always grateful to be part of these special moments.

Look forward to seeing you on the trails.



*Please remember Prairie Woods in your estate planning and annual giving.*